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Curriculum Navigation Report  
**Collaborative Classroom's Collaborative  
Literacy Curriculum, Grades K-5**

# REPORT INTRODUCTION

## Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines Description

*“Decisions regarding curriculum, instructional approaches, programs, and resources are critical and must be informed by more than experience, observations, or even belief systems. If we are to succeed in implementing effective practices, then we will need to embrace learning as a part of our work as much as teaching itself.” (Hennessy, 2020, p. 8)*

Due to the popularity of the science of reading movement, the term “science of reading” has been used as a marketing tool, promising a quick fix for administrators and decision makers seeking a product to check a box next to this buzzword. However, as articulated in The Reading League’s [Science of Reading: Defining Guide](#) (2022),

*the “science of reading” is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. Over the last five decades, this research has provided a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some students have difficulty; and how educators can most effectively assess and teach, and, therefore, improve student outcomes through the prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties. (p.6)*

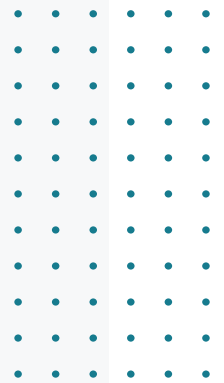
Accordingly, The Reading League’s [Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines](#) (CEGs) is a resource developed to assist consumers in making informed decisions when selecting curricula and instructional materials that best support evidence-aligned instruction grounded in the science of reading.

This resource is anchored by frameworks validated by the science of reading. Findings

from the science of reading provide additional understandings that substantiate both aligned and non-aligned practices (i.e., “red flags”) within the CEGs. These serve as a foundation for what to expect from published curricula that claim to be aligned with the scientific evidence of how students learn to read. The CEGs highlight best practices that align with the science of reading, while red flags specify any non-aligned practices in the following areas:



- Word Recognition
- Language Comprehension
- Reading Comprehension
- Writing
- Assessment



The CEGs have been used by educators, building and district leaders, local education agencies, and state education agencies as a primary tool to find evidence of red flags, or practices that may interfere with the development of skilled reading. This report was generated after a review of the curriculum using the March 2023 Curriculum

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Evaluation Guidelines, which have been refined based on feedback, a lengthy pilot review, and have undergone an inter-rater reliability study with positive results. While the CEGs have been useful for schools and districts for informing curricular and instructional decision-making, The Reading League recognized the challenge of school-based teams that might not have the capacity for an in-depth review process. In the spirit of its mission to advance the awareness, understanding, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction, expert review teams engaged in a large-scale review of the most widely-used curricula currently used in the United States in order to develop informative reports of each. As you read through the findings of this report, remember that red flags will be present for all curricula as there is no perfect curriculum. The intent of this report is not to provide a recommendation, but rather to provide information to local education agencies to support their journey of selecting, using, and refining instruction and instructional materials to ensure they align with the science of reading.

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*Disclaimer: The Reading League's curriculum review is deemed an informational educational resource **and should not be construed as sales pitches or product promotion.** The purpose of the review is to further our mission to advance the understanding, awareness, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction.*








# CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

The evaluation on the following pages features the review of Collaborative Classroom’s Curriculum, Collaborative Literacy, which is created for students in Grades K-5.

For this report, reviewers conducted a detailed examination of both the *Being a Reader* and *Being a Writer* programs, along with their corresponding materials. This review included Grade-Level Implementation Handbooks and Teacher’s Manuals which include specific support for Reading (K-5), Shared Reading (K-1), Vocabulary (K-2), Word Study (2-5), Independent Work (K-2), Letter Names (K), and Handwriting (K-1). Additionally, team members reviewed the Small Group Reading Sets for students in Grades K-2, which include Sets 1-5 for Emerging Readers and Sets 6-12 for Developing Readers. For Grades 3-5, the team examined Small Group Reading and Book Clubs lessons. All grade levels also offer Independent Application and Practice materials, which students complete on their own while the teacher meets with small groups. The review also examined the Grade-Level Implementation Handbook and Teacher’s Manuals for the *Being a Writer* program. Lastly, team members had access to the Learning Portal, a digital platform that includes resources and implementation support for educators.

Reviewers were selected based on their deep knowledge of the science of reading and associated terminology as well as high-quality instructional materials. Once selected, they were assigned to teams of at least three reviewers. The team met regularly to establish reliability in their individual scores and report their findings. For a more comprehensive description of the review process, visit The Reading League Compass’s Curriculum Decision Makers page: <https://www.thereadingleague.org/compass/curriculum-decision-makers/>

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">01</h2> <p><b>Red Flag statement is False.</b></p>		<h2 style="margin: 0;">02</h2> <p><b>Red Flag statement is minimally True. Evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned.</b></p>
	<h2 style="margin: 0;">03</h2> <p><b>Red Flag statement is mostly True. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum.</b></p>		<h2 style="margin: 0;">04</h2> <p><b>Red Flag statement is always True, pervasive, and/or integral to the curriculum.</b></p>
	<p><b>A black box indicates that this component is not addressed in this curriculum and must be addressed with other materials.</b></p>		

Reviewers used the notes section of each component to capture helpful evidence and notes, such as keywords that described a practice listed within the CEGs, specific examples, and precise locations of evidence. Notes were included in the review of any optional aligned components as well.

# FINDINGS:

## Components Supporting Word Recognition

### 1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
1.1: The three-cueing system is taught as a strategy for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	1
1.2: Guidance is given to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences.	2
1.3: Supporting materials do not provide a systematic scope and sequence nor opportunities for practice and review of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).	1

Collaborative Literacy’s **word recognition** non-negotiables are “**mostly met.**” While the team did not find evidence of the three-cueing system as a strategy for decoding, they did note instances where the explicitness of implementation could be more clearly defined. For example, in *Being A Reader*, Grade K, Unit 4, the curriculum offers guidance to educators through the following scripting:

The first page of this story says: *This is Henry's puppy, Mudge. Mudge wants to puppy.* Did what I read make sense? No, *Mudge wants to puppy* doesn't make sense. I'm going to go back and read this page again: *This is Henry's puppy, Mudge. Mudge wants to play.* Did that make sense? Yes, that makes sense, so I can continue reading. (p. 14)

The review team felt instances such as this were a missed opportunity to help students focus on decoding words by paying close attention to individual letters and sounds rather than guessing based on meaning or context clues.

Additionally, the review team felt both instruction and routines for high-frequency words could be made more explicit. Students in Grades K-1 use the *Being A Reader* High-Frequency Word Cards to introduce and review high-frequency words. However, the team found minimal evidence of consistent, explicit instruction on expected sound-spelling correspondences for

high-frequency words. For example, in *Being A Reader* for kindergarten, Unit 1, Week 3, Day 4, students are introduced to the high-frequency word “is.” Teachers are instructed to show the word “is” on the word card, reading the word as they sweep underneath it. Students are then directed to read the word and spell the word aloud as the teacher points to each letter. This routine is consistent throughout Grades K-1 and connections to associated letter-sounds are not made. As such, the team recommended implementing the Sound-Out Support strategy within the whole group setting. This supplemental routine is found within the *Being A Reader* Small Group Reading Sets 1-5 and allows emerging readers to develop their understanding of high-frequency words by emphasizing the connection between spelling-sound correspondences. This resource was located within the digital component of the *Being A Reader* materials, and it reinforces letter/sound correspondences, even for words that do not follow common sound-spelling patterns. The team emphasized that incorporating this routine would be an excellent way to make high-frequency word work more explicit for all students.

The Small Group Reading Sets 1-5 Instructional Cues resource includes additional teacher language and instructional cues for phonological awareness, phonics, and high-frequency words. The goal of this document “is to minimize teacher talk by providing clear and concise language that allows all students opportunities for active participation” (p. 1). The review team felt language in this document could be utilized to make instruction around high-frequency words more explicit in the whole group setting. For example, educators are provided with language to explain unknown or irregular spelling sounds, like, “In this word, /\_ / is spelled \_ . The sound is /\_ /” (p. 7). However, this guidance is not included within the Teacher's Manuals or modeled in the Professional Development Videos. Instead, the Review High-Frequency Words videos provide modeling of the Read, Spell, Read routine, where students read the word, spell the word, and then read the word again without any mention of sound correspondences. As such, the review team recommended incorporating a process for explicitly teaching and coding irregular words and updating the High-Frequency Words video clips to align with the guidance provided in the Sound-Out Support and Instructional Cues documents.



## 1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<b>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEME AWARENESS</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
1.7: Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) without moving to the phoneme level (e.g., blends such as /t/ /r/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds).	1
1.8: Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	1
1.9: Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	1
1.10: Phonological and phoneme awareness is not assessed or monitored.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s **phonological and phonemic awareness** practices are “**met.**” One of the primary goals of the Small Group Reading Sets 1-5 is for students to receive explicit, systematic instruction in phonological awareness. The program clearly defines this as comprising both phonemic awareness—the ability to identify, blend, segment, and manipulate individual sounds—and phonological sensitivity, which involves larger units of language, including words, syllables, and onset-rime. Students participate in daily lessons where they are tasked to work with individual sounds in words. *The Being a Reader Small Group Teacher’s Manual, Set 2* explains the following:

Beginning readers learn that spelling-sound knowledge is vital to decoding text. They come to realize that spoken words are made up of sound units (phonemes) and that the spellings they see on a page correspond with these phonemes. Once the students learn how to connect letters and sounds, they can efficiently read many words. (p. x)

This is addressed in the Small Group Reading Sets, which provide learners with explicit instruction in phonological awareness, spelling-sound decoding, and high-frequency words. Phoneme awareness is taught as a foundational skill which learners develop through blending (e.g., /m/ /ă/ /p/ into “map”) and segmenting (e.g., “map” into /m/ /ă/ /p/). These tasks progress from the identification of initial, final, and medial sounds to engaging students in dropping and substituting sounds.

The Small Group Reading Sets 1-5 each include between 12-21 decodable books tightly aligned to the curriculum's scope and sequence. There are three lessons associated with each text that take approximately 15 minutes in kindergarten, while comparable lessons in Grade 1 take about 20 minutes with the addition of the guided spelling routine. Days 1-2 follow a similar structure and include a phonemic awareness or phonological sensitivity task, the introduction of the spelling-sound, blending with decodable words, a sound sort activity, an introduction and review of high-frequency words, reading or rereading, and guided spelling for Grade 1 (optional for kindergarten). On Day 3, students engage in a phonemic awareness or phonological sensitivity task, a review of spelling-sounds, a review of high-frequency words, rereadings, a comprehension check and reflect, and guided spelling. This predictable structure is designed to reduce students' cognitive load, allowing them to focus more effectively on new content.

Finally, phonological and phonemic awareness are assessed and monitored as a part of Collaborative Literacy's curriculum. The Group Assessment offers teachers the opportunity to observe students as they practice different skills and strategies. The Group Assessments take place every four weeks and feature a corresponding Group Assessment Record with guiding questions teachers can utilize to focus their observations. Additionally, these Group Assessment Records offer educators suggestions as to how to move forward with instruction based on observational data. Collaborative Literacy also includes Mastery Tests to monitor individual student progress. Again, Mastery Tests appear every four weeks and have a corresponding Mastery Test Record and Mastery Test Student Card, which provide student directions. Students who show mastery of taught concepts move directly into Week 1 of the next set. The program provides suggestions for reteaching concepts to support learners who need additional assistance.



## 1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<b>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR PHONICS AND PHONIC DECODING</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
1.15: Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	1
1.16: Instruction is typically “one and done”; phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	1
1.17: Key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ŏ/).	1
1.18: Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) “mini-lessons” or “word work” sessions.	1
1.19: The initial instructional sequence introduces many (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, short vowels are all taught in rapid succession, and/or all sounds for one letter are taught all at once.	1
1.20: Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	1
1.21: Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, read using the first letter only as a clue, guess at words in context using a “What would make sense?” strategy, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	1
1.22: Words with known sound-symbol correspondences, including high-frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone “sight words” to be memorized.	2
1.23: Few opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.	1
1.24: Early texts are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts which include phonic elements that have not been taught; decodable texts are not used or emphasized.	1
1.25: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5): Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	1
1.26: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5): No instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition is evident.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s **phonics and phonic decoding** practices are “**mostly met.**” The program demonstrates strength in its phonic decoding practices through its focus on sound-symbol correspondences. Phonics instruction is explicit and systematic to ensure students “build their knowledge of spelling-sound relationships by applying them to reading words in isolation (word lists) and in decodable books” (*Being a Reader Small Group Teacher’s Manual*, Set 1, p. x). The sound-symbol correspondences are introduced gradually and students are provided with ample opportunities for practice. Word lists feature a variety of decodable words from the current week’s decodable text. This provides learners “with opportunities to read words with teacher support before they encounter them when reading by themselves” (*Being a Reader Small Group Teacher’s Manual*, Set 1, p. x).

Students participate in Small Group Reading Sets which span Grades K-2. Sets 1-5 support emerging readers and focus on phonological awareness, phonics, and high-frequency words, while sets 6-12 offer support for developing readers. Here the focus shifts to fluency, explicit instruction in reading strategies, as well as an emphasis on student self-monitoring and correction. The following table provides information of the instructional focus of the Small Group Reading Sets by grade level.

GRADE LEVEL	INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS
Kindergarten (Sets 1-4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short vowels, single consonants, CVC words</li> <li>Initial, final, medial sounds</li> <li>Consonant blends, digraphs, trigraphs</li> <li>Inflectional endings: -s, -ed, -ing</li> <li>Long vowels, final -e, vowel patterns, r-controlled vowels</li> </ul>
Grade 1 (Sets 3-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consonant blends, digraphs, and trigraphs</li> <li>Inflectional endings: -s, -ed, -ing</li> <li>Long vowels, final -e, vowel patterns, r-controlled vowels</li> <li>Silent letters and two-syllable decoding</li> <li>Word recognition and analysis</li> <li>Fluency, comprehension, independent thinking</li> </ul>
Grade 2 (Sets 5-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complex vowels</li> <li>Silent letters, two-syllable decoding</li> <li>Word recognition and analysis</li> <li>Fluency</li> <li>Comprehension and generating independent thinking with complex texts</li> </ul>

Blending is a core component of instruction and occurs in each lesson. Teachers are directed to use continuous blending, where students sound out words without stopping between sounds (e.g. /mmäänn/ instead of /m/ /ä/ /n/). Students are also offered multiple opportunities to practice word-level decoding. In one example, after instances of teacher modeling, students in Grade 1 were tasked to blend and read the following words: Nan, tan, mat, man, Sam, and sat. Starting in Grade 2, students participate in Advanced Word Study where they are tasked to read, analyze, and spell polysyllabic words as well as learn about and use prefixes and suffixes during Word Study.

While the key words for letter/sound correspondences are aligned with the specific phoneme being taught, the team felt that using “balloon” as a keyword might be problematic due to the presence of the schwa sound. Additionally, the program uses the keyword “thumb,” which represents the unvoiced /th/ sound; however, the voiced /th/ is not included. As such, the team recommended changing the keyword for Bb and including both the voiced and unvoiced representations of /th/ to the Spelling-Sound Chart. As mentioned previously, the team noted growth opportunities for high-frequency word instruction—specifically when instruction for high-frequency words attends to the symbol only and does not address sound. The whole group materials, including the Teacher’s Manuals, reference the Read, Spell, Read routine, which asks students to spell the words, but makes no connection to each letter’s corresponding sound. The review team did note two additional resources for introducing high-frequency words, including the Sound-Out Support routine and the Small Group Reading Sets 1-5 Instructional Cues document. These resources guide educators to highlight the sound-symbol connection for both regular and irregular spelling-sounds. However, team members were not able to locate references to either document in the whole group Teacher’s Manuals or modeled in the Professional Development Videos for High-Frequency Words. As a result, the team recommends that Collaborative Literacy integrate these protocols across all high-frequency word instruction.



## 1D: Fluency

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR FLUENCY</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
1.40: Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	1
1.41: Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	1
1.42: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	1
1.43: Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	1
1.44: Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., assessment based upon the cueing systems, M/S/V).	1

Collaborative Literacy's **fluency** practices are "**met.**" Starting in kindergarten, students participate in choral reading to practice fluency. The program uses choral reading as "a technique used in the shared reading lessons to support students as they learn to read" (*Being a Reader, Grade 1, Unit 1, p. 67*). This provides both a direct model and support for learners not yet reading on their own, while offering beginning readers the opportunity to practice with familiar text. In both instances, this serves to increase student confidence as well. The daily Shared Reading activities include weekly Story Posters that display the text to be read aloud, supporting whole group fluency building. Additionally, students build fluency by reading in pairs, echo reading, and through readers' theater and dramatic reading opportunities.

The *Small Group Teacher's Manual* clearly defines fluency as "more than reading rate," including accuracy, automaticity, and expression (p. xi). Students work on blending and reading decodable words daily, with many words taken directly from the week's decodable text. Once students transition to reading two syllable words, they begin to read syllable by syllable instead of blending sound by sound. Students are also offered practice opportunities across a variety of text types including narrative and informational text, poetry, songs, Story Posters, and through word lists utilized for blending assessments.

Regarding assessment, placement within the Small Group Reading Sets is based on mastery and includes a fluency component. For example, Sets 1-5 evaluate student fluency with letter recognition (5 second limit per letter), spelling-sounds (5 second limit per letter), high-frequency words (2 second time limit per word), and decodable words (5 second limit per word). As students progress onto sets 6-12, assessment “is designed to evaluate students’ accuracy, fluency, and comprehension of texts read independently,” and placement within Individualized Daily Reading is based upon students’ oral reading fluency (Small Group Reading Set Placement Assessment, p. 177). In Part A of this assessment, learners engage in silent and oral reading of a given text. Teachers are directed to mark a check for each sound or word a student reads correctly. They are then instructed to cross out any incorrect sounds or words. Furthermore, if a student responds incorrectly, educators are also encouraged to write down exactly what the student says.

## FINDINGS:

### Components Supporting Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

#### SECTIONS 2-4: Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

This section begins with a review of non-negotiable elements for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing before moving on to the language comprehension strands highlighted in Scarborough’s reading rope. Therefore, identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<b><i>NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING</i></b>	<b><i>SCORE</i></b>
2-4.1: (LC, RC, W) In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.	1
2-4.2: (LC, RC, W) Students are not exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials.	1
2-4.3: (RC) Comprehension activities focus mainly on assessing whether students understand content (the product of comprehension) instead of supporting the process of comprehending texts.	1
2-4.4: (RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	1
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level thinking skills.	1

Collaborative Literacy's non-negotiables for **language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing** are “**met.**” Elements of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing are taught in an explicit and systematic manner. For example, in *Being a Writer*, Grade 2, Unit 2, Week 1, Day 1, teachers are provided with clear directives for the week's instructional focus, including preteaching support and clear, step-by-step guidance in the daily lesson plans. Students are led through the following structure:

Getting Ready to Write:

1. Pair Students and Discuss Working Together
2. Read *Mela and the Elephant* Aloud
3. Teacher Modeled Thinking and Sketching Before Writing

Writing Time:

4. Visualize and Sketch Ideas for Stories
5. Share Sketches and Writing Ideas in Pairs

Reflecting:

6. Reflect on Working Together

This explicit format, which is seen throughout Collaborative Literacy's programs, focuses on teacher-driven instruction where students are guided through the learning process.

Reading-writing connection activities are taught in each unit of the program. Some activities are included as a part of the day's lesson, while others are completed as extension activities. Students are exposed to both rich vocabulary and syntax through a variety of read-aloud trade book texts that align to the curriculum's units and lesson plans. These texts represent multiple genres and serve as mentor texts for use during writing activities. The following table provides examples of trade books incorporated into the first unit of the school year, *The Classroom Community*, which is a throughline spanning Grades K-5.



GRADE	ASSOCIATED TRADE BOOKS
Kindergarten	<i>A Child's Day: An Alphabet of Play</i> by Ida Pearle <i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i> (Big book) by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault <i>Kipper's A to Z: An Alphabet Adventure</i> by Mick Inkpen
Grade 1	<i>Alma and How She Got Her Name</i> by Juana Martinez-Neal <i>It's Mine!</i> by Leo Lionni <i>This Is the Way We Go to School: A Book About Children Around the World</i> (Big book) by Edith Baer
Grade 2	<i>Girl Wonder: A Baseball Story in Nine Innings</i> by Deborah Hopkinson <i>McDuff Moves In</i> by Rosemary Wells <i>Sheila Rae, the Brave</i> by Kevin Henkes
Grade 3	<i>Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community</i> by Susan Verde <i>Our Subway Baby: The True Story of How One Baby Found His Home</i> by Peter Mercurio <i>The Good Little Book</i> by Kyo Maclear
Grade 4	<i>Hó'onani: Hula Warrior</i> by Heather Gale <i>Fauja Singh Keeps Going: The True Story of the Oldest Person to Ever Run a Marathon</i> by Simran Jeet Singh <i>Little Libraries, Big Heroes</i> by Miranda Paul
Grade 5	<i>Be the Change: A Grandfather Gandhi Story</i> by Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus <i>Because</i> by Mo Willems <i>Turning Pages: My Life Story</i> by Sonia Sotomayor

Educators are provided with suggested vocabulary and figurative language aligned to weekly texts. Additional vocabulary suggestions for multilingual learners are included, as well. Weekly vocabulary lessons provide educators with words to review, words to instruct, and word-learning strategies that are introduced as a part of the weekly lesson. For example, in *Being a Reader*, Grade 1, Unit 7, students learn four words connected to the books *A House Spider's Life* and *Bugs for Lunch*, as well as review previously learned words. Additionally, “they review the independent word-learning strategies of recognizing antonyms, using the inflectional ending -es, and recognizing shades of meaning” (*Being a Reader Teacher's Manual*, Grade 1, p. 2).

Questioning during read-alouds features a variety of question types. In *Being a Reader*, Grade 3, Unit 1, Week 1, Day 1, students discuss the story, *Thesaurus Has a Secret* by answering the following questions:

- What do you think this story might be about?
- What happens in this story?
- What do you notice about the words Thesaurus uses?
- Why do you think the author named the main character Thesaurus?
- What do you like about reading?
- What can be hard about reading?
- What do you like about learning new words?
- What can be hard about learning new words?
- What words do you like hearing and want to know more about?
- What do you notice about these words?

These thoughtful questions encourage students to engage with the text in different ways by fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and a love of language.

## 2B: Background Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<b><i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE</i></b>	<b><i>SCORE</i></b>
2.1: Read-aloud opportunities emphasize simple stories or narrative texts. Read-aloud text is not sufficiently complex and/or does not include knowledge-building expository texts (i.e., topics related to science, social studies, current events).	1
2.2: Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	1
2.3: Advanced (Grades 2-5): For students who are automatic with the code, texts for reading are primarily leveled texts that do not feature a variety of diverse, complex, knowledge-building text sets to develop background knowledge in a variety of subject areas.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **background knowledge** are “**met.**” As previously mentioned, Collaborative Literacy’s trade book list provides teachers with access to high-quality, read-aloud texts that expose students to a variety of genres as well as rich vocabulary and syntax. These texts are utilized across Grades K-5 offering learners of all ages access to complex narrative and knowledge-building expository text sets. As students progress into Grades 3-5 and are more automatic with the code, they participate in Book Clubs, which again contain diverse texts designed to build learner knowledge. Furthermore, Collaborative Literacy provides educators with guidance on selecting appropriate books for students in Book Clubs. It suggests that teachers consider both the complexity of a text and students’ interest levels. Teachers should also encourage students to share their opinions, fostering ownership and thoughtful choice. However, if a student chooses a book that may not be a good fit, the teacher should have a one-on-one discussion to understand the student’s perspective before making a final decision. It’s acceptable for students to occasionally read books that are simpler or more complex, especially if they are highly motivated by the topic. In cases where a complex book is chosen, teachers should ensure there is a support plan to address any challenges that arise.

Furthermore, built in Pre-Teaching support offers guidance for educators as they help learners connect and build background language. For example, third grade students read and discuss the story *Pop’s Bridge* by Eve Bunting. Prior to reading the text, teachers are guided to ask students, “What do you already know about bridges?” They then examine the image on the front cover, explaining to students how a bridge is supported by cables (strong metal ropes), and girders (metal bars). Teachers then explain the purpose of scaffolding during bridge construction, describing it as a wooden platform designed to support workers as they construct the bridge.



## 2C: Vocabulary

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR VOCABULARY</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
2.7: Vocabulary worksheets and activities are used with little opportunity for deep understanding of vocabulary words.	1
2.8: Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.	1
2.9: Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly and practiced; students are not given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing.	1
2.10: Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	1
2.11: Explicit instruction in morphology is not present and/or not taught according to a scope and sequence (i.e., simple to complex) consistently throughout K-5 instruction.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **vocabulary** are “**met.**” The curriculum clearly defines vocabulary knowledge as “going beyond just knowing the meanings of words,” and to fully understand a word, “the reader must also take into account the function of the word in the sentence and the context in which the word is used in the text” (*Being a Reader Implementation Handbook, Grade 3, p. xx*). As such, vocabulary activities are designed to foster a deep understanding of vocabulary words and memorization is never emphasized. Instruction is aligned to the four-part instructional framework for vocabulary, including the direct and explicit instruction of targeted vocabulary words; incidental instruction of vocabulary through point of context teaching within a text; instruction of independent word learning strategies, including dictionary use, context clues, and cognates for Spanish-speaking students; as well as opportunities for students to develop an awareness and interest in words through varied language experiences. Collaborative Literacy exposes students to both Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary. These words are taught explicitly and are introduced to students in the context of a familiar text. Learners then engage in a variety of activities, including using targeted terminology in a sentence, choosing a vocabulary word that best describes a story

character, and determining whether a certain scenario that includes the targeted word makes sense. These activities provide learners with the opportunity to deeply explore vocabulary terms. Finally, explicit instruction in morphology starts in kindergarten, beginning with inflectional suffixes and progressing to the study of etymology and morphology by Grade 5. This progression builds from simple to complex, ensuring that students develop a deep understanding of how words are formed and how their meanings are connected.

## 2D: Language Structures

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<b>RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR LANGUAGE STRUCTURES</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
2.18: Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught implicitly or opportunistically with no evidence of consistent, explicit, simple to complex instruction across all grade levels.	1
2.19: Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	1
2.20: Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **language structures** are “**met.**” The curriculum features a K-5 Grammar Skills and Conventions Scope and Sequence that provides educators with a clear progression of what grammar and conventions skills need to be introduced and when, ensuring that students build a strong foundation in grammar and syntax. There are opportunities for teacher modeling and discussion around targeted sentences as seen in a *Being a Writer, Grade 3, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 2* lesson where students discuss the model sentence, “The big wall is old and empty.” Teachers are guided to facilitate a class discussion around whether the sentence is a complete thought (yes) as well as the identification of the subject (The big wall) and predicate (is old and empty). The conversation then shifts to the identification of run-on sentences as students read, discuss, and correct the run-on, “Families and neighbors eat together they also share stories” (p. 48). Additional topics include the use of precise words to replace imprecise ones, pronoun-noun agreement, discussion of transitional words and phrases, analysis of temporal words and phrases as used in a personal narrative, and analysis of the author’s choice of verbs. Finally, instead of memorization, students are asked to explore the function of parts of speech. For example, in the *Being a Writer, Grade 3, Personal Narrative Unit*, students review the function of pronouns, or words that can be used in place of a noun. Students then work on identifying pronouns as well as the nouns they replace in sentences from the book, *My Grandma and Me*.

## 2E: Verbal Reasoning

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR VERBAL REASONING</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
2.26: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text (i.e., picture walking).	1
2.27: Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **verbal reasoning** are “**met.**” The curriculum specifically defines verbal reasoning as the “ability to analyze written and verbal information,” consisting of skills like “making inferences and constructing meaning from figurative language” (*Being a Reader Implementation Handbook, Grade 3, p. xxi*). Students engage in practices where they respond to inferential questions (e.g., answering questions about a character’s actions and feelings) as well as answer and ask questions that “require them to explain their thinking” (*Being a Reader Implementation Handbook, Grade 3, p. xxii*). Teachers are provided with clear directives for instruction, including the use of explicit instruction on making inferences through the use of visual and textual cues, teacher-modeled think-alouds, and the use of open-ended questions that promote critical thinking.

## 2F: Literacy Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR LITERACY KNOWLEDGE</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	1
2.34: Genre-specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **literacy knowledge** are “**met.**” Students read, listen to, and discuss a variety of text types in both whole and small groups as well as independently. For example, after completing the Small Group Reading Sets 1-12, students in Grades 3-5 participate in Small Group Reading and Book Clubs. The selected texts provide students with exposure to a range of genres, including historical fiction, realistic fiction, mystery, expository

nonfiction, and narrative nonfiction. This progression is systematic, with third graders focusing more on fiction (including realistic fiction, historical fiction, and mystery), while fifth graders engage with an increased emphasis on nonfiction. Additionally, instruction includes explanation and discussion about genre-specific text structures as well as their corresponding signal words. Students are also tasked with responding to and asking questions about the structure of a given text.

### Section 3: Reading Comprehension

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i><b>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR READING COMPREHENSION</b></i>	<i><b>SCORE</b></i>
3.1: Students are asked to independently read texts they are unable to decode with accuracy in order to practice reading comprehension strategies (e.g., making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing).	2
3.2: Students are asked to independently apply reading comprehension strategies primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	1
3.3: Emphasis on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	1
3.4: Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	1
3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **reading comprehension** are “**mostly met.**” During the whole group read-aloud as well as guided and independent practice, students are taught reading comprehension strategies. This includes using schema/making connections, retelling, visualizing, questioning, using text features, making inferences, determining importance, and analyzing text structure. Students are also tasked with practicing reading comprehension strategies during independent reading time. While independent reading is not the central focus of the curriculum, reviewers specifically noted that an inclusion of independent reading across the grade levels is problematic as it lacks teacher guidance, and students may not actively engage with the text. Furthermore, independent reading can be particularly challenging for younger readers who have not yet developed sufficient word attack skills. In Collaborative Literacy’s curriculum, independent reading begins in kindergarten, and students spend 15 minutes, up to four days a week, reading books independently; however, at

this stage, many students lack the ability to decode with accuracy. This raises concerns about the appropriateness of introducing independent reading before foundational reading skills are firmly established, as it may lead to frustration and limit the effectiveness of the practice. The reviewers also observed that the curriculum’s Implementation Guidance for Grade K describes the teacher’s role in independent reading as being “actively involved, discussing texts with individual students, helping them select appropriate books, and assessing and supporting their reading” (p. 38). While this differs from models like Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), it still raises concerns about the effectiveness of independent reading time in improving literacy outcomes.

Students learn to self-monitor their comprehension “by asking themselves questions as they read and through activities that encourage them to think about the ways that they think about texts” (*Being a Reader Implementation Handbook, Grade 3, p. 16*). As such, students learn to use strategies like asking questions, stop and jots, and double-entry journals to encourage them to interact with the material and reflect on what they’ve read. Students also learn to use “fix up” strategies to resolve confusion when they encounter difficulties in a text. This includes strategies such as rereading, which teaches students to go back into the text and read a sentence, paragraph, or passage again to clarify meaning.

#### 4A: Writing – Handwriting

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR HANDWRITING</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
4.1: No direct instruction in handwriting.	1
4.2: Handwriting instruction predominantly features unlined paper or picture paper.	1
4.3: Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **handwriting** are “**met.**” Students in kindergarten and Grade 1 engage in direct instruction in handwriting in the whole group setting. Instruction includes hand and finger stretching exercises, pencil grip, and posture, as well as instruction and practice with the necessary stroke sequences for forming capital and lowercase letters and punctuation. Handwriting instruction begins in Unit 1, Week 3 of kindergarten with one

whole group lesson per week as well as suggestions for independent practice. Letters are introduced in groups that feature similar stroke sequences. Teachers are instructed to review the stroke sequences in advance, so they are well-prepared to model the week’s letters. Students engage in initial practice through the use of wipe-off boards which are used to practice writing letters, words, and sentences. One side of the wipe-off board is blank, while the other features lines to support proper letter formation and alignment. Additionally, the student handwriting notebook features lined paper to aid learners with proper alignment and letter spacing, while also supporting legibility.

## 4B: Writing – Spelling

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR SPELLING</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
4.7: No evidence of explicit spelling instruction; no spelling scope and sequence, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics / decoding scope and sequence.	1
4.8: No evidence of phoneme segmentation and/or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	1
4.9: Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are based on content or frequency of word use and not connected to decoding/phonics lessons.	1
4.10: Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g., rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).	1
4.11: Spelling patterns for each phoneme are taught all at once (e.g., all spellings of long /ā/) instead of a systematic progression to develop automaticity with individual graphemes/phonemes.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **spelling** are “**met.**” In *Being a Reader*, spelling is integrated into Small Group Reading in Grade 1, and is part of Word Study starting in Grade 2. During these guided spelling lessons, students spell decodable and high-frequency words with teacher guidance and support. For example, in the Small Group Teacher’s Manual, Set 2, students practice spelling the decodable words “bat” and “hit” and the high-frequency word “saw.” Students are prompted to segment the decodable words, “clapping softly as they say each sound” (Small Group Teacher’s Manual, Set 2, p. 12). Students then spell the word on the lined side of their wipe-off boards. To support segmenting, educators are directed

to provide students with a visual cue by drawing three blank lines side by side on the wipe-off board and to point to each blank in order as students segment the sounds. Learners check their work by comparing their answers to the teacher's and are prompted to erase and correct any errors. Student spelling is assessed via the Student Progress Assessment which includes a spelling-sounds/decoding score as well as a high-frequency words score. Word Study lessons teach students to spell polysyllabic words with previously learned affixes. For example, in *Being a Reader*, Unit 5, Week 1, Day 5, students practice spelling the polysyllabic word "imprint" syllable by syllable. After the teacher introduces the word and uses it in a sentence (e.g., "They will imprint the name of our team on our baseball uniforms."), students are asked to repeat the word (imprint), name the number of syllables (two), and then segment the word accordingly (im-print). Students then spell the word by writing one syllable at a time before checking and correcting their work by comparing it to the teacher's. Students then repeat this process with the following words: impress, input, entrap, enlarge, magician, and puppeteer. For the last three words, the teacher identifies challenging sounds, such as the schwa in the first syllable of "magician" and the second syllable of "puppeteer." Students are also taught to make "strategic spelling choices" by listening carefully to the sounds in words using the sound-symbol correspondences they have learned. Teachers are directed to model this strategy through the careful pronunciation of words, listening to the sounds produced, and using sound-symbol correspondences to represent them.

#### 4C: Writing – Composition

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<b>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR COMPOSITION</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
4.17: Writing prompts are provided with little time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas.	1
4.18: Writing is primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	1
4.19: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure are not explicitly taught and practiced systematically (i.e., from simple to complex) with opportunities for practice to automaticity; instead they are taught implicitly or opportunistically.	1
4.20: Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	1
4.21: Students are not taught the writing process (e.g., planning, revising, editing).	1
4.22: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	1

Collaborative Literacy’s practices for **composition** are “**met.**” Writing is highly structured and teaches students to write about reading, offers explicit instruction in genre-specific writing skills, and provides opportunities for learners to engage in a supportive writing community. Students in Grades K-1 engage in both whole class and guided practice activities where writing is modeled and practiced at the letter, word, and simple sentence levels. Additionally, these learners participate in shared writing experiences where students and their teacher craft a shared story. During these lessons, students witness the writing process first hand as the teacher models brainstorming ideas, adding details, and using targeted skills and conventions. For learners in Grades 3-5, the writing process is introduced starting in Unit 2 of the *Being a Writer* curriculum, and students complete genre-specific pieces where they engage in prewriting, drafting, revising and editing, and publishing. Students in these grades also practice a variety of prewriting activities (e.g., quick writes, sharing ideas with a partner, etc.) as well as lessons designed to help them integrate sensory details and topic-specific word choices into their writing. Students across all Grades K-5 are offered access to authentic mentor texts and integrated grammar and conventions lessons designed to support learners in revising and proofreading. Instruction of conventions, grammar, and sentence structure is explicit and follows a scope and sequence that is developmentally appropriate, systematically building on prior knowledge and skills.

Students learn about a variety of genres which are supported through the use of mentor texts. For example, in Grade 3, students complete a genre unit on opinion writing. During this time, students read a variety of opinion texts including “School Should Start Later in the Morning,” “Don’t Change Our Start Time,” “Rats Are the Coolest Pets,” “Why You Should Get a Dog,” and “Computers in Our Classrooms.” They learn about the specific structure, purpose, and features of opinion writing and engage in activities where they are tasked to write about their personal opinions using reasons to support their thinking. Thus, reading and writing are integrated purposefully as a means to strengthen student comprehension and composition skills.



# FINDINGS:

## Components Supporting Assessment

### SECTION 5: Assessment

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR ASSESSMENT</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
5.1: Assessments measure comprehension only without additional assessment measures to determine what is leading to comprehension weaknesses (e.g., phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, listening comprehension).	1
5.2: Assessments include miscue analysis in which misread words that have the same meaning are marked as correct.	1
<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR ASSESSMENT</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
5.6: Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled-text gradient.	1
5.7: Foundational skills assessments are primarily running records or similar assessments that are based on whole language or cueing strategies (e.g., read the word by looking at the first letter, use picture support for decoding).	1
5.8: Phonics skills are not assessed.	1
5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed.	1
5.10: Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	4
5.11: Oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	2
5.12: The suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	1
5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language.	4

Collaborative Literacy's non-negotiables and practices for **assessment** are **"somewhat met."** The curriculum offers educators assessments for phonics, phoneme awareness, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. However, reviewers were unable to locate the use of nonsense words for assessment. Starting in kindergarten, students participate in Small Group Placement Assessments for Sets 1-5. These include both whole group and individual summative assessments. Progression within the sets is based on mastery and begins with an evaluation of students' phonological awareness. This first screener consists of two sections: one that measures initial sound knowledge and one that evaluates rhyme. When these are mastered, students move on to letter recognition, spelling-sounds, high-frequency words, and decodable words and are assessed in each until mastery is shown. As stated previously, placement within the Small Group Reading Sets includes a timed fluency component, as well. For example, Sets 1-5 evaluate student fluency with letter recognition (5 second limit per letter), spelling-sounds (5 second limit per letter), high-frequency words (2 second time limit per word), and decodable words (5 second limit per word).

An Oral Reading Fluency Assessment is only provided during the Small Group Placement Assessments for Sets 6-12. Teachers are directed to introduce the text and have students read it silently and then aloud. They are instructed to not count errors that the student self-corrects. Teachers then circle the total number of errors the student made during oral reading on the Accuracy Table on the Student Placement Assessment Record. They also review the indicators for phrasing and expressing by checking off qualifiers that best describe the student's reading. This includes behaviors like reading word by word, grouping words together in phrases, using appropriate expression and intonation, as well as using an appropriate rate and voice reflective of the punctuation marks. However, the team had some concerns about the coding example provided on the sample Placement Assessment Record for the passage "Koalas." They felt that the coding resembles meaning, structure, and visual cues (MSV) coding, specifically with the example word "funny/s/." The team recommended updating the example so that the coding shown does not resemble MSV markings used on running records.

Educators would also need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure that multilingual learners are assessed in their home language. However, this would most likely be the case with most core curricula programs. Additionally, the review team noted that Collaborative Literacy's curriculum includes Teacher Notes and Guidance for Multilingual Learners. These resources include instructive information for assessing multilingual learners individually or in small groups, reading instructions aloud or paraphrasing them, modeling and/or repeating directions, allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge using different modalities and formats, using visual supports, accessing classroom resources, and extending time for student observation (*Being a Reader Implementation Handbook, Grade 1, p. 70*). Additionally, Collaborative Literacy's materials provide teachers with useful guidance for making differentiated Tier 1 instructional decisions through their Helpful Lesson Features and Support for English Learners.

## FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

Overall, the **reviewed components** for Collaborative Literacy’s curriculum were found to “**meet**” or “**mostly meet**” most criteria for Grades K-5. This means there was minimal evidence of red flag practices. While an evidence-aligned core curriculum is a critical part of any literacy program, it is no substitute for building a solid foundation of educator and leader knowledge in the science of reading as well as a coaching system to support fidelity of implementation.

*Collaborative Literacy’s trade book selection provides learners with a diverse array of rich academic texts that encourage exploration of varied perspectives and topics, represent multiple genres, and serve as exemplary models of effective writing.*

*Collaborative Literacy purposefully integrates reading and writing. Reading-writing connection activities are integrated into each unit of the program, with some included in the day’s lesson and others designed as extension activities to build strong writers and deepen comprehension.*

*Collaborative Literacy addresses the language comprehension strands of Scarborough’s reading rope, including background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. The development of these critical skills allows readers to extract meaning from the text.*

*Collaborative Literacy’s support for multilingual learners is comprehensive. The Being a Reader Implementation Handbook includes Helpful Lesson Features which offer educators strategies to enhance the delivery of their lessons. Additionally, the Support for English Learners section includes useful information to build teacher knowledge and offers strategies to support multilingual learners. Together, these resources provide practical tools and strategies to tailor instruction and promote success for all learners.*

*Reviewers found the Professional Development Videos in the Small Group Reading materials particularly impactful for educators. The videos provide clear examples of the program’s strategies, allowing educators to experience program implementation directly.*

## CHALLENGES

*Collaborative Literacy's instructional materials would benefit from the elimination of any language related to Balanced Literacy. For example, the sample coding provided in the same document for the passage "Koalas" resembles an MSV approach (i.e., meaning, structure, and visual cues). As such, the team recommended updating the example so that the coding shown does not resemble MSV markings used on running records.*

*Collaborative Literacy's instruction for high-frequency words could be enhanced by making an explicit connection to letter/sound correspondences. The review team did note additional resources for introducing high-frequency words including the Sound-Out Support routine and the Small Group Reading Sets 1-5 Instructional Cues document. These resources guide educators to highlight the sound-symbol connection for both regular and irregular spelling-sounds, and the team recommends that these protocols be utilized across all high-frequency word work.*

*Collaborative Literacy's assessment practices were found to be limited and potentially open to subjective interpretation. Assessment materials could be refined by clarifying guidance for educators. Furthermore, the assessments do not feature nonsense words. This is problematic as nonsense words reveal a student's ability to decode unknown words by following predictable phonetic patterns.*

*While independent reading is not the central focus of the curriculum, Collaborative Literacy does place an emphasis on it across the grade levels. This is problematic—especially for learners in Grades K-1—as independent reading typically lacks teacher guidance, and younger students may not have developed sufficient word attack skills. This raises concerns about the appropriateness of introducing independent reading before foundational reading skills are firmly established, as it may lead to frustration and limit the effectiveness of the practice.*

*Although the key words for letter/sound correspondences are aligned with the specific phoneme being taught, Collaborative Literacy would benefit from reconsidering some of their key word choices. First, the team felt that using the key word "balloon" might be problematic due to the presence of the schwa sound. Additionally, the program uses the key word "thumb," which represents the unvoiced /th/ sound; however, the voiced /th/ is not included. As such, the team recommended changing the key word for Bb and using both the voiced and unvoiced representations of /th/ on the Spelling-Sound Chart.*

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# **PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE**

Curriculum Navigation Report

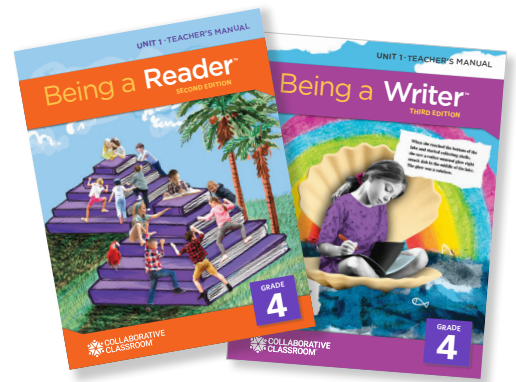
**Collaborative Classroom's  
Collaborative Literacy Curriculum,  
Grades K-5**

## Publisher's Response

The Reading League Compass is the only comprehensive resource for evaluating curricular alignment with the science of reading, making it invaluable for curriculum decision-makers.

Collaborative Classroom deeply appreciates The Reading League's thorough and constructive evaluation of Collaborative Literacy (2021), our comprehensive ELA core curriculum for grades K–5 that is comprised of the *Being a Reader* and *Being a Writer* programs.

The only third-party evaluation of Collaborative Literacy (2021) to date, this report underscores the program's strengths while providing valuable insights for refinement.



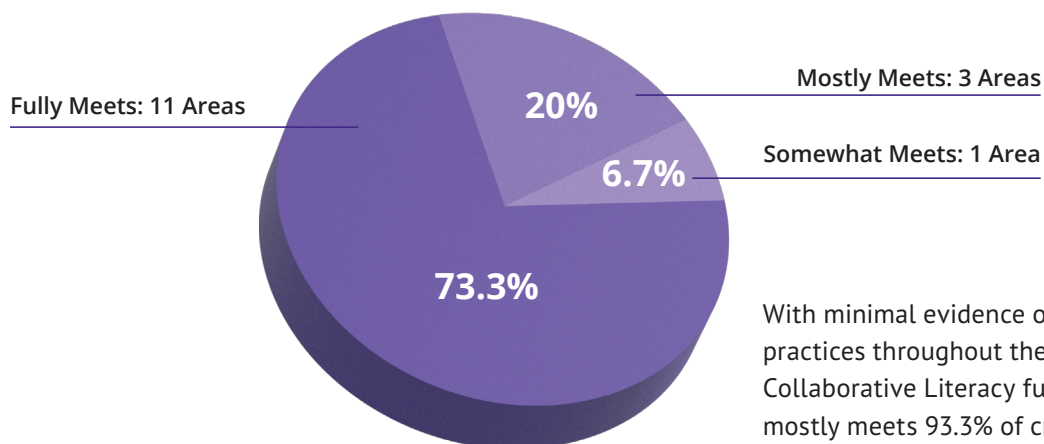
### STRENGTHS

#### ► Minimal Evidence of Red Flag Practices

In their final report summary, The Reading League reviewers stated: **“Overall the reviewed components for Collaborative Literacy’s curriculum were found to ‘meet’ or ‘mostly meet’ most criteria for Grades K–5. This means there was minimal evidence of red flag practices.”**

These findings indicate both Collaborative Literacy’s pedagogy and materials are well aligned with the scientific evidence base of how children learn to read.

### Collaborative Literacy Fully Meets or Mostly Meets 93.3% of Criteria



## STRENGTHS (continued)

### ▶ Alignment with Evidence-Based Practices

Reviewers indicated that **Collaborative Literacy effectively incorporates critical components of Scarborough’s Reading Rope**, including “background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge.” This alignment with evidence-based practices reinforces Collaborative Literacy’s capacity to build skilled readers.

### ▶ Purposeful Integration of Reading and Writing

The seamless and intentional connection between reading and writing activities across all grade levels of Collaborative Literacy was considered a significant strength.

Reviewers noted that throughout *Being a Reader* and *Being a Writer*—which together comprise Collaborative Literacy—**“reading and writing are integrated purposefully as a means to strengthen student comprehension and composition skills”** and that specific “reading-writing connection activities are integrated into each unit.”

### ▶ Support for Multilingual Learners

**“Collaborative Literacy’s support for multilingual learners is comprehensive,” reviewers determined.**

The program’s “practical tools and strategies” for tailoring instruction to support multilingual learners were praised, including explicit instructional guidance and differentiated support. These features ensure equitable access to learning for all students, regardless of language background.

Reviewers also noted that Collaborative Literacy provides “useful information to build teacher knowledge” about [supporting multilingual learners](#).

### ▶ Rich, Wide-Ranging, and High-Quality Texts

Reviewers noted Collaborative Literacy’s exceptional trade book collection, calling attention to its **“array of rich academic texts that encourage exploration”** and expose students to varied topics and ideas, rich vocabulary, and multiple genres.

These carefully selected texts serve as “exemplary models of effective writing” and provide an engaging foundation for developing critical reading skills.

### ▶ Professional Development Resources

**Reviewers commended Collaborative Literacy’s professional development videos as “particularly impactful for educators”** in that they “provide clear examples of the program’s strategies, allowing educators to experience program implementation directly.”

As part of Collaborative Classroom’s comprehensive [system of professional learning support for educators and leaders](#), these resources are intended to strengthen implementation fidelity and empower educators to deliver instruction effectively.

## ADDRESSING FEEDBACK

In this section, we address feedback and provide additional context for the three areas in which Collaborative Literacy “mostly meets” criteria and the one area that “somewhat meets” criteria.

<b>Breakdown of How Collaborative Literacy Meets Criteria</b>	
<b>Fully Meets Criteria for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phonological and phonemic awareness</li><li>• Fluency practices</li><li>• Language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing</li><li>• Background knowledge</li><li>• Vocabulary</li><li>• Language structures</li><li>• Verbal reasoning</li><li>• Literacy knowledge</li><li>• Handwriting</li><li>• Spelling</li><li>• Composition</li></ul>
<b>Mostly Meets Criteria for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Word recognition</li><li>• Phonics and phonic decoding</li><li>• Reading comprehension</li></ul>
<b>Somewhat Meets Criteria for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessment</li></ul>

### ► Enhancing High-Frequency Word Instruction

Starting in 2025, instructional materials were revised to ensure the sound-out protocols were integrated throughout all materials, both digital and print.

### ► Adjustments to Mnemonics for Phonics Instruction

The keyword for /th/ was adjusted to “that thumb” to address the voiced and unvoiced sounds of the digraph. We reviewed the keyword “balloon” and chose to keep it because of the importance of maintaining alignment between our Tier 1 and Tier 2 mnemonics. We are supporting teachers with modeling the /b/ sound clearly during instruction (as is needed with all stop consonants, regardless of the keywords used).

### ► Independent Reading Practice for Younger Learners

The feedback regarding independent reading for early grades has been noted, and we affirm that students must have opportunities to practice reading decodable texts while also engaging with texts that nurture their curiosity and build their interests. We will continue implementation guidance to emphasize the teacher’s vital role during independent reading sessions and ensure that students, especially younger readers, are provided with appropriate support. In addition, starting in 2025 students can engage in daily independent practice of foundational skills and reading (including decodable texts and informational articles) using our curriculum aligned literacy app, CC PAL.

## ADDRESSING FEEDBACK<sub>(continued)</sub>

### ► Clarification of Assessment Language

The coding example that could be misconstrued as MVS (meaning, structure and visual cues) was immediately updated to align with research-based practices and uploaded.

### ► Clarification of Assessment Practices

Since the initial review, we have strengthened our assessments and scoring guidance considerably. Our assessments now feature structured rubrics with clearly defined performance levels, explicit scoring criteria, and teacher guidance that includes administration procedures and suggested instructional next steps. Assessments are also organized around consistent comprehension skill targets across units, supporting more reliable progress monitoring over time. We have also added fluency assessment support embedded within Individualized Daily Reading (IDR), giving teachers a practical, curriculum-integrated opportunity to observe and document students' reading fluency in an authentic context.

Our position remains that nonsense word measures are most effective as a screener or diagnostic tool administered at the system level, rather than as a component of curriculum-embedded assessments. Our assessments are designed to provide meaningful, instructionally aligned information and we continue to recommend that Collaborative Literacy be implemented within a broader assessment system that includes a validated screener incorporating nonsense word measures.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REPORT

### ► What Reviewers Noted about Collaborative Literacy

Reviewers called out specific features and examples from both *Being a Reader* and *Being a Writer*, which together comprise Collaborative Literacy.



### On Lesson Structure

“This predictable structure is designed to **reduce students’ cognitive load, allowing them to focus more effectively on new content.**”

“Elements of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing are taught in an explicit and systematic manner. For example, in *Being a Writer*, Grade 2, Unit 2, Week 1, Day 1, **teachers are provided with clear directives for the week’s instructional focus, including preteaching support and clear, step-by-step guidance in the daily lesson plans.** ... This explicit format, which is seen throughout Collaborative Literacy’s programs, focuses on teacher-driven instruction where students are guided through the learning process.”



## On Phonics and Phonic Decoding

“**The program demonstrates strength in its phonic decoding practices through its focus on sound-symbol correspondences.** Phonics instruction is explicit and systematic to ensure students ‘... build their knowledge of spelling-sound relationships by applying them to reading words in isolation (word lists) and in decodable books’ (*Being a Reader Small Group Teacher’s Manual*, Set 1, p. x).”



## On Fluency

“Collaborative Literacy’s fluency practices are ‘met.’ Starting in Kindergarten, students participate in choral reading to practice fluency. The program uses choral reading as ‘a technique used in the shared reading lessons to support students as they learn to read’ (*Being a Reader*, Grade 1, Unit 1, p. 67). **This provides both a direct model and support for learners not yet reading on their own, while offering beginning readers the opportunity to practice with familiar text.** In both instances, this serves to increase student confidence, as well.”



## On Trade Books in Collaborative Literacy

“Collaborative Literacy’s trade book list provides teachers with access to high-quality read aloud texts that expose students to a variety of genres as well as rich vocabulary and syntax. **These texts are utilized across grades K–5, offering learners of all ages access to complex narrative and knowledge-building expository text sets.** As students progress into grades 3–5 and are more automatic with the code, they participate in Book Clubs which again contain diverse texts designed to build learner knowledge. Furthermore, Collaborative Literacy provides educators with guidance on selecting appropriate books for students in Book Clubs.”

“**The selected texts provide students with exposure to a range of genres, including historical fiction, realistic fiction, mystery, expository nonfiction, and narrative nonfiction.** This progression is systematic, with third graders focusing more on fiction (including realistic fiction, historical fiction, and mystery), while fifth graders engage with an increased emphasis on nonfiction. Additionally, instruction includes explanation and discussion about genre-specific text structures as well as their corresponding signal words. Students are also tasked to respond to and ask questions about the structure of a given text.”



## On Questioning During Read Alouds

“Questioning during read alouds features a variety of questioning types ... **These thoughtful questions encourage students to engage with the text in different ways** by fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and a love of language.”



## On Vocabulary

“**Vocabulary activities are designed to foster a deep understanding of vocabulary words where memorization is never emphasized.** Instruction is aligned to the four-part instructional framework for vocabulary including the direct and explicit instruction of targeted vocabulary words, incidental instruction of vocabulary through point of context teaching within a text, instruction of independent word learning strategies, including dictionary use, context clues, and cognates for Spanish-speaking students as well as opportunities for students to develop an awareness and interest in words through varied language experiences.”

“Explicit instruction in morphology starts in Kindergarten, beginning with inflectional suffixes and progressing to the study of etymology and morphology by Grade 5. **This progression builds from simple to complex ensuring that students develop a deep understanding of how words are formed and how their meanings are connected.**”



## On Writing Composition

“**Writing is highly structured and teaches students to write about reading, offers explicit instruction in genre-specific writing skills as well as provides opportunities for learners to engage in a supportive writing community** ... Students across all grades K–5 are offered access to authentic mentor texts and integrated grammar and conventions lessons designed to support learners with revising and proofreading. Instruction of conventions, grammar, and sentence structure is explicit and follows a scope and sequence that is developmentally appropriate, systematically building on prior knowledge and skills.”



## On Supporting and Assessing Multilingual Learners

“Collaborative Literacy’s curriculum includes Teacher Notes and guidance for multilingual learners. **These resources include instructive information for teachers including recommendations for assessing multilingual learners** by allowing students to be assessed individually or in small groups, reading aloud or paraphrasing instructions, modeling and/or repeating directions, allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge using different modalities and formats, use of visual supports, access to classroom resources, and extended time for student observation (*Being a Reader Implementation Handbook*, Grade 1, p. 70). Additionally, **Collaborative Literacy’s materials provide teachers with useful guidance for making differentiated Tier 1 instructional decisions** through their Helpful Lesson Features and Support for English Learners.”

## OUR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

As a mission-driven organization, Collaborative Classroom values the insights provided by The Reading League’s reviewers and is committed to addressing areas for improvement. Our goal is to deliver resources that exceed expectations by continually evolving to align with the latest research in literacy education.

By enhancing the clarity, consistency, and effectiveness of both our [programs](#) and our [professional learning](#), we strive to support educators and empower students on their journey to literacy success.

We thank The Reading League for this opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and advance our shared mission of bringing evidence-aligned literacy instruction to all.

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Collaborative Classroom is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all students become proficient readers, writers, and thinkers who learn from, care for, and respect one another. Since the organization’s founding, our work has reached more than 10 million students and 440,000 educators across the country.

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